

**T**here was a running gag among campaign regulars, not long ago, that organized labor's vaunted political support meant \$500 and a sound truck. Not very funny if you were counting on labor to win. Well, those days may be going the way of the Wobblies.

In the 33rd District Senate special election May 12th, organized labor was supposed to be a pallbearer for the Democratic candidacy of Cecil Green of Norwalk. But, incited by Republican Governor George Deukmejian's proposal to scrap the \$8 million Cal-OSHA worker-safety program, organized labor unleashed more than \$100,000 in campaign funds, volunteer workers and printing services, playing a crucial role — maybe the deciding factor — in helping Green upset GOP Assemblyman Wayne Grisham of Norwalk by 9 percentage points.

Former Senate Republican Leader Jim Nielsen of Rohnert Park, whose leadership was tethered to Grisham's ill-fated candidacy, called labor's involvement "the greatest rallying of people" since the unions defeated a right-to-work initiative in 1958.

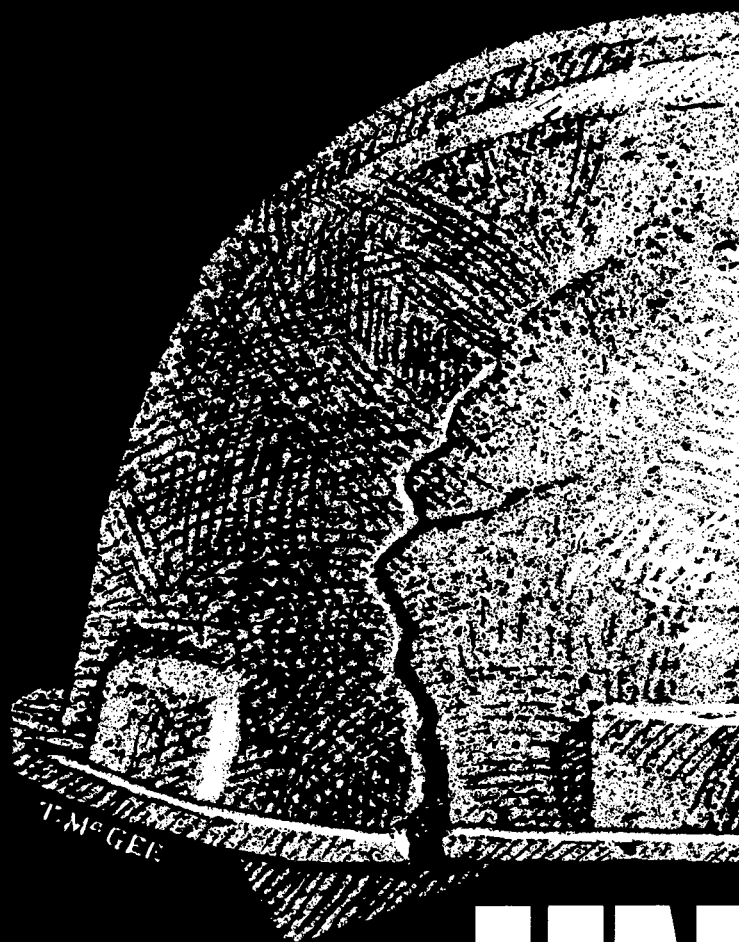
"That election was won by the labor movement, by us," Jerry Cremins, president of the State Building and Construction Trades Council, thundered to 700 delegates at a recent AFL-CIO Joint Legislative Conference.

Ironically, the stunning special election victory comes at a time when the trade-union movement — and its political sway — appear in steady decline.

Chronically high employment during most of this decade, a crush of foreign imports, a devastated industrial base, a hostile administration in Washington that has — in labor's view — reduced the National Labor Relations Board to a piece of paper, and corporations' aggressive union-busting strategies have combined to reduce the proportion of union members in the non-farm work force in California to a postwar low of 19.6 percent, according to the most recent statistics compiled by the state Industrial Relations Department. That compares to 40.8 percent in 1951. The 2,152,700 union members in all sectors of California's work force are noticeably less than the 2,179,800 showing up on union rolls in 1973.

The public's enthusiasm for labor also is on the wane. A 1984 *California Poll* taken by the Field organization, the last one conducted on the subject, found the public evenly divided on unions: 45 percent believed unions do more good than harm, and 44 percent said they do more harm than good. But in 1977 the majority of Californians felt unions did more

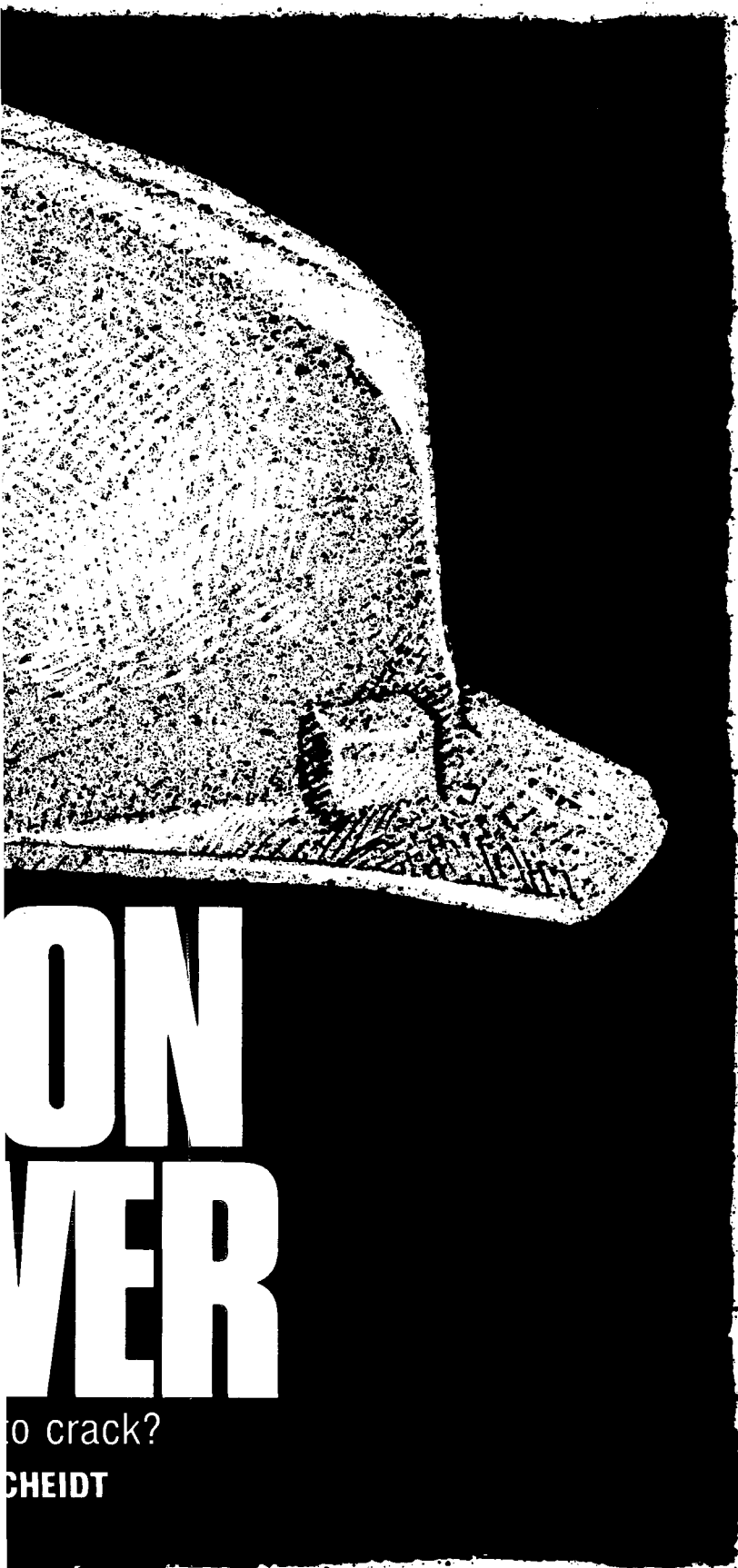
*Bruce Scheidt is Capitol correspondent for the Bakersfield Californian.*



# UN POV

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good than harm by a wide 56-28 percent spread. And despite the overwhelming opposition of organized labor, Republican Governor George Deukmejian won re-election by a landslide 1.7 million votes.

"When the nation is in trouble — and we are in trouble despite the appearances of wealth — the nation's unions are in trouble," observed John F. Henning, executive secretary-treasurer of the state AFL-CIO.

The loss of union jobs in the last 10 years has been felt virtually everywhere in the manufacturing industries in California. Machinists and steelworkers have seen their union jobs reduced to 105,200 in 1985 from 130,800 in 1975. The oil slump and industrial decay have eliminated 17 percent of union jobs just since 1983 in the oil, chemical and rubber industries in California. Construction-trade unions representing carpenters, laborers, operating engineers and plumbers were dealt a heavy blow by the depressed housing market, which only recently turned around. These trade-union rolls were reduced to 309,400 in 1985 from 340,500 in 1975.

The only area of sustained union growth is in the public sector, thanks in large part to laws giving collective-bargaining rights to government workers during the past administration of Democratic Governor Jerry Brown.

Federal, state and local unions account for 405,800 union jobs — almost 19 percent of the entire organized labor work force. Twelve years ago government's share was 13 percent, accounting for 288,800 jobs. The largest of organized labor's political action committees are controlled by public-employee unions — the Association for Better Citizenship of the California Teachers Association, and the California State Employees Association.

Union organizing of government workers has been virtually immune to loss of the state's industrial base. "You can't import your government from Taiwan," said Dean Mitchell, director of the Industrial Relations Institute at UCLA. "The government is more insulated from the pressures in the marketplace."

Despite its falling influence in California's work force, organized labor retains considerable political clout. It has powerful and close allies in Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, a San Francisco Democrat, and Senate President pro Tempore David Roberti, a Hollywood Democrat. While Deukmejian can veto — and has, with regularity — labor-sponsored legislation, the Democratic leaders give labor veto power to stop employer-backed proposals.

"Labor can force people to sit down and negotiate," said Assembly Employment and Labor Chairman Richard Floyd, a Lawndale Democrat.

*Continued on next page*

Henning, pointing to friends like Brown and Roberti and to the election of Green, observed, "Politically, it can't be said we're washed up."

Gerald O'Hara, the Teamsters' chief lobbyist for 21 years, said his union has not lost any speed on the political playing field. And for a reason the politicians understand, says O'Hara: "We still represent a lot of well-paid workers."

Roberti says the unions' membership rolls are only part of the power indicator. "Labor clout increases or decreases in terms of how powerful they are perceived in the field, and I think they are perceived as very powerful now, based on this (election)," Roberti said. "I think people will think twice before they cast too many votes against labor."

Kirk West, president of the California Chamber of Commerce, said the liberal legislative leadership, ensconced by

a gerrymandered reapportionment plan, has magnified labor's influence. Labor's interests also have been capably protected by two other Capitol veterans — labor's widely respected chief lobbyists, AFL-CIO's Henning and Teamsters' O'Hara, West said.

"There might be a little loss of (labor) clout since I came here in 1963, but there's less than what people assume," West said.

But there is heavy doubt, even among Democratic partisans, whether labor can transform Green's victory into a sustained political drive throughout California. First, labor was given a great organizing incentive with Deukmejian's Cal-OSHA proposal. And second, the 33rd District balloting was a special election in an area of Los Angeles and Orange counties that has the highest concentration of union house-

## Teacher unions: m

**S**ome of the biggest shocks felt in California during the past decade have not been from earthquakes. Like tectonic forces, political and demographic shifts have caused a major upheaval in public school classrooms. Administrators shook when teachers, after years of futile legislative efforts, finally gained collective-bargaining rights in 1975. Three years later locally-elected boards lost control over school finances to the state when voters scaled back property taxes with passage of Proposition 13. And the changes should continue well into the next decade as an aging Anglo population and the rising influx of Asian and Hispanic immigrants extend ethnic-minority dominance in California's urban schools.

These unique challenges will test whether California's two largest teacher unions can adapt to the changing needs of their profession. As lawmakers search for ways to reform the teaching occupation, the unions representing teachers have been forced to ask themselves if they need to be more "unionlike," fighting to retain historical job protections. Or should they be more like a professional organization, willing to explore new roles to improve the quality of teachers, including a less-adversarial relationship with administrators?

In this debate, the 39,000-member California Federation of Teachers of the AFL-CIO plays Avis to the California Teacher Association's Hertz, one of the biggest unions in California with 176,000 members. Yet it is the CFT which is getting higher marks from education lobbyists and legislators for a progressive approach to classroom reform. CTA may have the political clout, because of its superior size and immense campaign fund-raising capability, but CFT has gained the edge in respect in the Capitol.

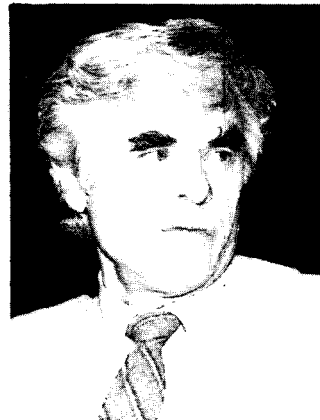
"Almost everything with CTA boils down to membership and money, money, money," said an education lobbyist, who asked not to be identified. "The CFT is much more oriented toward making improvements in the teaching profession."

Senate Education Committee Chairman Gary Hart, a Santa Barbara Democrat, said CFT has shown itself more interested in "quality indicators" — among them, peer evaluation, teacher proficiency testing and higher academic standards. CTA has been "very defensive" when any of these new approaches have been introduced, said Hart.

The definition of "progressive" can be very subjective,

and CTA President Ed Foglia gets rigid when he hears criticism that his union's concern for quality instruction is being eclipsed by CFT. The reform movement since 1983, Foglia claims, "has gone in the wrong direction." The real issue, he maintains, is a lack of funds in the educational system.

"We're trying to focus on the real issue," Foglia said. "Large class size is a real issue. It's a lot easier to talk about something else rather than issues that cost money. When we



Myers



Foglia

complain about education, we're called obstructionist."

Ironically, CTA started out as the more "professional" organization. It was the rival CFT, under the national leadership of American Federation of Teachers President Albert Shanker, which had a somewhat radical image in the 1960s. Until 1970 the CTA continued to have administrators within its ranks and did not embrace collective bargaining. Today the only indication that CTA, an affiliate of the giant National Education Association, once backed away from traditional unionism is its refusal to affiliate with the AFL-CIO, to which CFT belongs.

The two unions defy easy categorizing as liberal or conservative. Republican legislators, who largely disdain CTA, call it a liberal organization, a client of the Democratic Party, whose candidates got 96 percent of CTA's political contributions in the 1985-86 election cycle. But CFT President Miles



holds in the state, so labor could muster all its resources without fear of spreading itself too thin elsewhere.

"The working man is not as interested in the solidarity of the union. He's interested in a job and making a living," former GOP Senate Leader Nielsen said. "And let's make something clear. These labor 'volunteers' were paid. That's not insignificant."

What made Green's victory so meaningful to Democrats was the unprecedented involvement and cooperation of organized labor. Never before had so many unions — sensitive to raids by rival unions — felt comfortable about security precautions and turned over their closely-guarded membership lists to a Democrat's campaign, according to Larry Sheingold, Green's campaign director.

The Green campaign also turned back a page in histo-

ry and utilized what labor does best — people organizing. Modern campaigns, which have emphasized "hit piece" mailings, radio and television, had moved away from that old-fashioned campaign method.

Green's grass-roots campaign had a new and distinctly high-tech look. And it was expensive. The successful formula relied on computerized precinct lists, unprecedented in sophistication, all hand-punched and hand-researched. The lists focused on households with at least one labor resident, a high degree of Democratic loyalty and frequent voting habits. That made the absentee-voter campaign the most expensive in history, but also the most effective. Adding to the cost was extensive overhead: more than 2000 labor union recruits, many compensated financially for their time; campaign headquarters and even sub-headquarters;

# Marriage or mayhem

Myers of Oakland says CTA is the more conservative of the two unions.

"We are in favor of exploring new ways of organizing schools," Myers claims. "They have tended to be more conservative."

CFT leaders are exploring a new concept of shared decision-making in the schools called "trust agreements." The idea is for teachers and administrators to participate in a collegial purpose on issues that lie outside the scope of collective bargaining.

"Our goal is to build a profession again," Myers said. "Our general position has not changed, but society has changed and the needs of education have changed."

Myers says the higher levels of literacy required in today's competitive economy dictate that teacher standards have to be improved and that teachers must get more involved in the hiring and firing process.

CTA's Foglia, however, views administrators as adversaries who cannot be trusted. "Administrators and school boards don't care about good teachers," Foglia declares. "They don't give a damn about the quality of education."

Despite the outside criticism, CTA is a powerful force in the Legislature. CTA's big-league political action fund — the PAC ranked fifth in 1985-86 contributions — is a major reason critics hesitate to voice their objections publicly. A former CTA official noted, "I've been told by legislators, 'What in the heck is CTA doing (on legislation)?' But they'd vote with CTA anyway. You have to think it was because of the PAC."

Despite philosophical differences on several reform issues, the two rival unions have been talking merger. CFT's Myers says a merger makes sense, since both organizations endorse the same slate of Democratic candidates; both embrace collective bargaining for teachers; and both think there is a shortage of public funds in the teaching profession.

"Why should we keep fighting each other?" Myers asks.

The two unions occasionally wage jurisdictional warfare, and the results can be messy and costly. Last year CFT narrowly missed ousting CTA as the exclusive bargaining agent in a decertification in the San Francisco Unified School District. Myers vows another fight to represent San Francisco teachers when the current contract nears expiration. "In 1989 we'll be back at it again," he says.

CFT recently beat CTA in a decertification election in the San Diego Community College District.

"We still have pushing and pulling going on. Why not sit down and figure out a way to work together?" Myers says.

The major unresolved question is how to divide per-capita union dues. CTA's Foglia insists — and Myers agrees — that under a merger he or his successor would lead the new union, since CTA is much larger. All members would have mandatory membership in the National Education Association, CTA's parent organization, Foglia insists, while membership in the American Federation of Teachers, CTA's parent, would be optional. Myers says the principle he is working from is that everybody will pay the same level of dues, regardless of affiliation.

**F**oglia hints a major obstacle is AFT President Albert Shanker. It galls Foglia that Shanker has become the recognized national leader in the teacher-reform movement, because his favorable national press has overshadowed NEA President Mary H. Futrell.

"That is about the biggest crock," Foglia says of the statesman-like image enjoyed by Shanker. "She's more in tune with what is needed in the classroom than Shanker would know on any given day."

Myers says Shanker is "absolutely supportive" of a merger. In any event, the CFT president has imposed a mid-1988 deadline for a merger.

"If we can't bring it off in the next year, then we'll part company in a friendly fashion," Myers said.

Others in the education community are split as to whether a merger would be beneficial for education. "It's nice to have two different perspectives," Rebecca Bauman, a lobbyist for California School Boards Association, said. "Multiple voices from a profession of 200,000 is very healthy."

Senator Hart said the unions would probably benefit from a merger. "You could argue competition is a good thing," he said. "On the other hand, the two organizations spend so much time giving the appearance they are better for teachers, that it's a tremendous drain on the resources of the organizations, maybe even on the philosophies."

—Bruce Scheidt

and significant transportation costs involving the movement of campaign workers.

"Labor considered this a training academy for its own people," said Steve Coony, the labor specialist on Roberti's staff. "The unions got back a lot of new (political) data about their own memberships. And now they have 1000 new volunteers in Southern California."

As a result, Democrats have a powerful new weapon that was needlessly holstered in the past.

"Labor provides the Democratic Party with an infrastructure that we just don't have as a party," Roberti said.

No matter how many legislative elections labor helps put in the Democratic column, the fact remains that unions have limited political influence as long as Republican George Deukmejian sits in the governor's office.

Tom Rankin, the state AFL-CIO's research director, said, "You can't talk about our power without talking about our governor. He controls how much we get accomplished." In other words, labor can defeat bills and occasionally nominees it opposes, but that is the extent of its influence these days in Sacramento.

Deukmejian vetoed 34 AFL-CIO bills last year, including an increase in workers' compensation benefits — labor's key issue this year. Maximum payment for temporary

employers on workers'-compensation reform if Rinaldi were in the same room, complaining that Rinaldi is not a neutral arbiter. "He's worse than the employers in the negotiations," Henning said. "The employers sit back and let Rinaldi carry the reactionary load."

Rinaldi infuriated Henning when, during negotiations on workers' compensation, the Industrial Relations director stated, with supporting evidence, that employers would leave the state if labor's proposal was fully accepted. Henning walked out.

"He only speaks for the employers," Henning fumed. "Do you think they'll be more reasonable than he is?"

Rinaldi said in an interview Deukmejian would not accept any workers'-compensation reform package that would hurt economic development. That is why he felt obligated to speak his views during the negotiations. "I have never been instructed, nor given any indication by the governor, that my agenda should be destructive to the workers of organized labor," Rinaldi said. "What's more important than jobs for labor? The bigger the workers' compensation costs, the more it will cost in terms of jobs."

The California State Employees Association, the largest union representing state government workers, also has had its share of struggles with the administration. Salaries, however, have not been a major issue. State workers have seen their paychecks rise 34 percent since 1982-83 — a higher gain than the 26 percent hike in private-sector salaries and considerably above the 22 percent inflation rate during the five-year period, according to statistics developed by the state.

The raw nerve in the relationship has been over the administration's policy of contracting out state jobs. CSEA claims 1000 state jobs have been lost because the administration has hired private contractors to do the work instead of state employees; the administration claims half of that.

"To listen to CSEA, you'd think we're significantly trying to cut state government," said Jim Mosman, director of the Department of Personnel Administration, pointing out state government's entire work force is 150,000.

CSEA claims the administration would be contracting out far more state jobs without the union's vigilant opposition. CSEA has several lawsuits charging the administration is not following the law in contracting out. In addition, the union has gone to court in a separate action alleging the state Constitution forbids contracting out any job which could be performed by a state worker.

"I think he (the governor) thinks he can do what he damn well pleases until somebody stops him," said CSEA President Patrick Monahan. "And we are the ones who can stop him."

Despite the tough talk, Monahan was elected president last year on a campaign to improve relations with the administration and minority-party Republicans. The union last year endorsed Democrat Tom Bradley and gave more than 90 percent of its campaign funds to Democratic candidates. Recognizing that 30 to 40 percent of CSEA's members are Republicans, Monahan said his union's helping hand will line more GOP pockets in the next election.

"My philosophy is, you have to deal with both sides of the aisle," says Monahan. "We're trying to convince the administration that labor and management can get along." The new CSEA president even promised the governor in a face-to-face chat in April that CSEA publications would no longer lampoon him with cartoon caricatures exaggerating his prominent proboscis.

The 82,000-member CSEA, meanwhile, has been under siege from rival groups seeking to raid its membership. The



O'Hara

Monahan

Henning

disability is \$224, which ranks 39th among the states.

Even before he proposed eliminating Cal-OSHA, Deukmejian had made deep cuts in the worker-safety agency in his first term. In late May a Sacramento Superior Court judge ruled Deukmejian could not end Cal-OSHA without legislative consent. But Judge Roger Warren did not rule on whether Deukmejian could eliminate the program's budget or take other steps to stop its enforcement of state worker-safety rules.

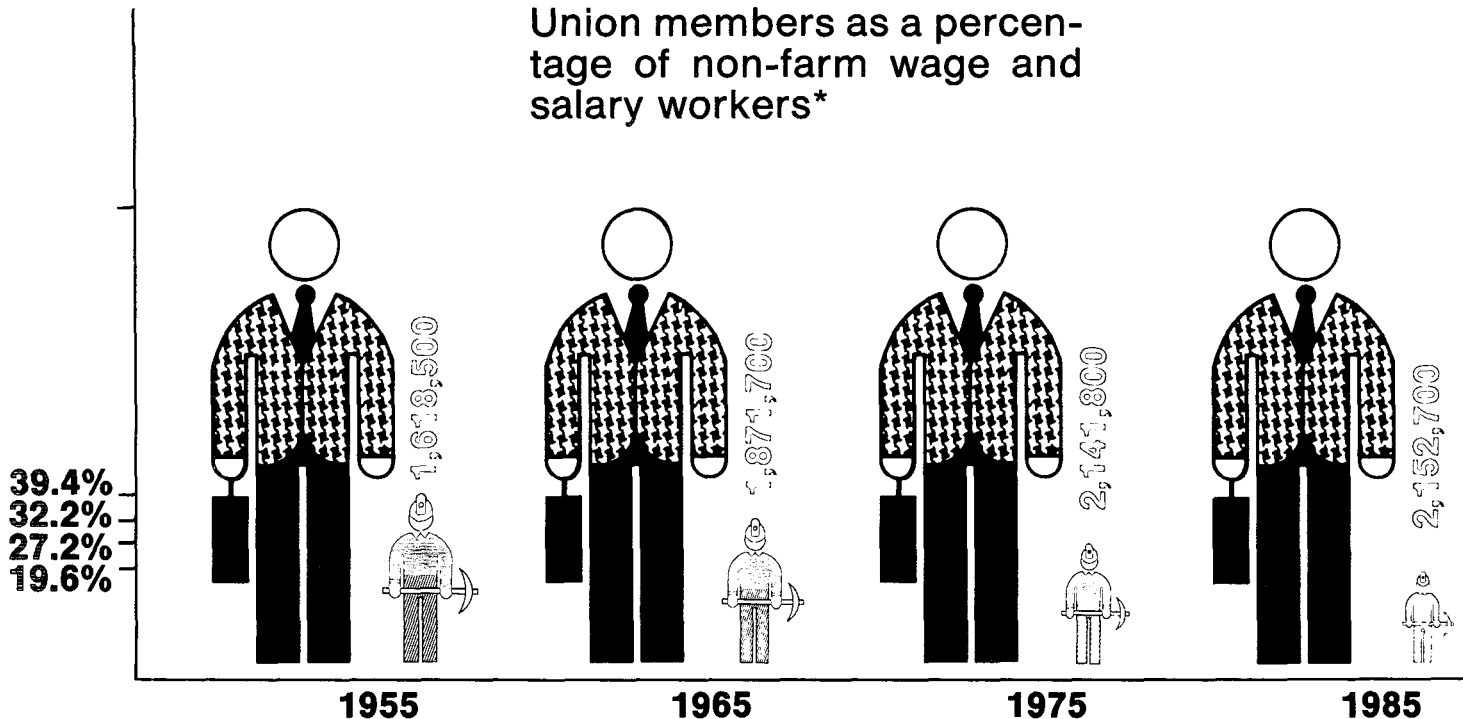
Deukmejian also has made steep reductions in the Agricultural Labor Relations Board budget, and his grower-backed appointments have caused the United Farm Workers to stop using the state law for organizing. The UFW instead has returned to the boycott to win contracts, a strategy it utilized successfully before the landmark farm-labor law was passed in 1975.

The AFL-CIO's Henning said Deukmejian is the first governor in almost 50 years who failed to seek advice from organized labor before appointing an Industrial Relations director. Deukmejian also is the first governor in that same period who has not appointed someone from organized labor to sit on the Workers' Compensation Appeals Board, Henning added.

Labor's war against the governor was declared early in Deukmejian's first term when the Senate, responding to AFL-CIO complaints, refused confirmation of former Republican Congressman Victor Veysey as Industrial Relations director. And Veysey's replacement, Ron Rinaldi, has not been any more acceptable.

Henning earlier this year refused to negotiate with em-

## Union members as a percentage of non-farm wage and salary workers\*



\*Does not include employers, own-account workers, unpaid family workers, domestic servants or agricultural workers.

Source: California Department of Industrial Relations

association affiliated with Service Employees International Union of the AFL-CIO in 1984 to prevent raids by other AFL-CIO unions. But that hasn't stopped poaching by other groups. Last year CSEA lost a decertification election of a smaller unit to the California Association of Professional Scientists. CSEA faced a major threat in a June 22nd decertification election challenging CSEA's continued representation of 10,000 crafts and maintenance workers in Unit 12. CSEA was fighting back, filing a lawsuit in San Francisco Superior Court alleging that the consulting firm of Blanning and Baker Associates was funding the decertification attempt to replace the union with its own "dummy organization" for its own profit.

Except for a few law-enforcement unions, organized labor's political contributions go almost exclusively to Democratic candidates. The AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education did not give a dime to any Republican candidate last year. The Teamsters gave less than 1 percent of its campaign funds to Republicans in 1985-86. The blue-chip political action committees controlled by two public-employee unions — CSEA and California Teachers Association — gave more than 90 percent of a combined \$1 million in contributions to Democrats in 1985-86.

The major exception is the burgeoning California Correctional Peace Officers Association, which represents prison guards. Because of a rapid prison-building program, CCPOA has had phenomenal growth — from 2100 members in 1980 to 15,000 this year. It formed a political action committee in 1982, and it grew to more than \$400,000 in the 1985-86 election cycle. Its \$160,000 in contributions to Deukmejian was the largest union donation to the GOP governor; additionally, it gave an estimated 40 percent of its legislation donations to Republicans. CCPOA President Don Novey said the bipartisan contributions have yielded better retirement and disability benefits and higher pay. He

said other public-employee unions would do well to follow CCPOA's example.

"We've discovered labor groups have to take a more moderate tone to get their packages through. It worked for us," Novey said.

It is a myth that organized labor's campaign contributions tend to balance out business contributions. "Nothing could be further from the truth," says California Common Cause Executive Director Walter Zelman. "When it comes to campaign contributions — whether at the statewide, state legislative or local government levels — labor is not in the same league as business. Many candidates can win without any support from labor. It is almost impossible to win without very significant support from business."

**Z**elman said the perception of labor as a major money force in politics is maintained because heavily-reported lists of top contributors always contain four or five labor groups among the top 10 or 15 contributors in the state. But a list of the top 100 contributors — if one were published — would show just five to 10 labor organizations, against 70 or 80 business organizations, Zelman said. In addition, relatively few union members give sizable amounts as individuals, whereas many of the state's business leaders give generously as individuals.

A major political issue before the AFL-CIO this year, with obvious implications, is whether the federation will follow the 1984 example and make a presidential endorsement before the first primary ballots are cast in 1988. The national AFL-CIO recently kicked off its endorsement process by releasing videotaped responses of presidential candidates to questions put to them by the labor federation. The responses are being distributed to union locals so members can educate themselves in time for the October convention. The AFL-CIO will endorse a candidate if there





Sacramento teachers picket in the Sacramento City Teachers Association strike of January, 1987. Photo by Len Feldman, courtesy of the California Teachers Association.

is a two-thirds vote from the convention delegates.

In the last presidential campaign cycle, the federation for the first time endorsed a candidate during the primary season. Labor helped Walter Mondale survive Gary Hart's challenge for the Democratic nomination, but all it did was tag Mondale with a "special interest" label and force an unelectable candidate upon the electorate in the general election. Labor leaders doubt any of the Democratic candidates in the 1988 race can get the necessary two-thirds support.

"We had the ideal labor candidate in Mondale; he dominated the field," Henning said. "I couldn't see a two-thirds vote coming easily in the field we now have."

There is debate within the labor federation about the wisdom of an early endorsement. Raoul Teilhet, vice president of the state AFL-CIO, said he thinks an early endorsement would be a "bad idea" because there is no consensus candidate. The 1988 endorsement should "percolate from the worksite," Teilhet said.

"You build a union from the bottom up, not top down," Teilhet said.

Roberti is one of many Democratic leaders who hopes the AFL-CIO does not make an early endorsement. "They're not that strong yet," Roberti said. "The public is not ready for labor to pick the candidate. They are ready for labor to support, and support heavily."

Henning bristled with the suggestion that labor should

be expected to support just any nominee the Democratic primaries throw its way. "We're not going to sit back and let a conservative Democrat get the nomination and be asked to get out there and bleed for a conservative Democrat," Henning said. "We can't accept that."

What of the future? The labor federation has attempted to respond to the new challenges with new organizing strategies. The AFL-CIO, for example, is designing discounted programs — insurance, credit unions and individual retirement accounts — for workers who were once organized or who tried to organize but failed.

In California, Los Angeles-area AFL-CIO unions have begun helping undocumented workers qualify for legal resident status under the new federal immigration law. A dozen unions have contributed more than \$100,000 to fund the program.

"Immigration reform is the most important issue confronting California unions," Dave Sickler, regional director of the AFL-CIO, says. "By helping these brave new immigrants to become legal, we can improve the bargaining power and living standards of all workers in every workplace."

The federation also hopes to generate some good will with the immigrant workers, which could pay off later in organizing campaigns. "Cynics can argue it is a great organizing aid," Henning said. "I'm not dismissing it. But we feel it's our moral obligation." 🏠